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Complete Works *of* Abraham Lincoln

Edited by
JOHN G. NICOLAY *and* JOHN HAY

With a General Introduction *by*
RICHARD WATSON GILDER, and Special Articles
by OTHER EMINENT PERSONS

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VOLUME I

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Lincoln as a Writer *

OF style, in the ordinary use of the word, Lincoln may be said to have had little. He certainly did not strive for an artistic method of expression through such imitation of the masters, for instance, as Robert Louis Stevenson's. There was nothing ambitiously elaborate or self-consciously simple in Lincoln's way of writing. He had not the scholar's range of words. He was not always grammatically accurate. He would doubtless have been very much surprised if any one had told him that he had a "style" at all. And yet, because he was determined to be understood, because he was honest, because he had a warm heart and a true, because he had read good books eagerly and not coldly, and because there was in him a native good taste, as well as a strain of imagination, he achieved a singularly clear and forcible style, which took color from his own noble character, and became a thing individual and distinguished.

He was, indeed, extremely modest about his accomplishments. His great desire was to convince those whom he addressed, and if he could do this

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Lincoln as a Writer

EXECUTIVE MANSION,

WASHINGTON, November 21, 1864.

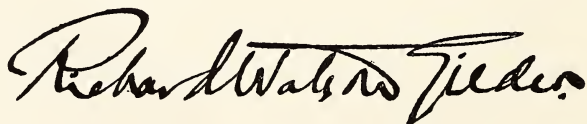
MRS. BIXBY, Boston, Massachusetts.

DEAR MADAM: I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

This letter of consolation in its simplicity and fitness again recalls the Greek spirit. It is like one of those calm monuments of grief which the traveler may still behold in that small cemetery under the deep Athenian sky, where those who have been dead so many centuries are kept alive in the memories of men by an art which is immortal.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Richard Watson Tilden". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" starting with a large, ornate capital 'R' and the last name "Tilden" ending with a long, sweeping tail.

Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln

ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF SANGAMON COUNTY,¹
March 9, 1832.

FELLOW-CITIZENS: Having become a candidate for the honorable office of one of your Representatives in the next General Assembly of this State, in accordance with an established custom and the principles of true Republicanism, it becomes my duty to make known to you, the people whom I propose to represent, my sentiments with regard to local affairs.

Time and experience have verified to a demonstration the public utility of internal im-

¹Lincoln was just past his twenty-second year when he indited this address to the people of Sangamon County. Though defeated in the effort to become a member of the General Assembly of the State of Illinois, his address, distributed in the form of a handbill, aroused great interest and enthusiasm among his fellow-citizens. It became one of the prime factors in promoting navigation of the Sangamon River. It is worth passing mention to note that this defeat as a candidate for the Illinois legislature was the only one Lincoln ever suffered by direct vote of the people.

provements. That the poorest and most thinly populated countries would be greatly benefited by the opening of good roads, and in the clearing of navigable streams within their limits, is what no person will deny. Yet it is folly to undertake works of this or any other kind without first knowing that we are able to finish them—as half-finished work generally proves to be labor lost. There cannot justly be any objection to having railroads and canals, any more than to other good things, provided they cost nothing. The only objection is to paying for them; and the objection arises from the want of ability to pay.

With respect to the County of Sangamon, some more easy means of communication than it now possesses, for the purpose of facilitating the task of exporting the surplus products of its fertile soil, and importing necessary articles from abroad, are indispensably necessary. A meeting has been held of the citizens of Jacksonville and the adjacent country, for the purpose of deliberating and inquiring into the expediency of constructing a railroad from some eligible point on the Illinois River, through the town of Jacksonville, in Morgan County, to the town of Springfield, in Sangamon County. This is, indeed, a very desirable object. No other improvement that reason will justify us

in hoping for can equal in utility the railroad. It is a never-failing source of communication between places of business remotely situated from each other. Upon the railroad the regular progress of commercial intercourse is not interrupted by either high or low water, or freezing weather, which are the principal difficulties that render our future hopes of water communication precarious and uncertain.

Yet, however desirable an object the construction of a railroad through our country may be; however high our imaginations may be heated at thoughts of it—there is always a heart-appalling shock accompanying the amount of its cost, which forces us to shrink from our pleasing anticipations. The probable cost of this contemplated railroad is estimated at \$290,000; the bare statement of which, in my opinion, is sufficient to justify the belief that the improvement of the Sangamon River is an object much better suited to our infant resources.

Respecting this view, I think I may say, without fear of being contradicted, that its navigation may be rendered completely practicable as high as the mouth of the South Fork, or probably higher, to vessels of from twenty-five to thirty tons burden, for at least one-half of all common years, and to vessels of much greater burden a part of the time. From my peculiar

ever remained, in the most humble walks of life. I have no wealthy or popular relations or friends to recommend me. My case is thrown exclusively upon the independent voters of the country; and, if elected, they will have conferred a favor upon me for which I shall be unremitting in my labors to compensate. But, if the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointments to be very much chagrined.

Your friend and fellow-citizen,

A. LINCOLN.

NEW SALEM, March 9, 1832.

RECEIPT FOR ARMS

BEARDSTOWN, April 28, 1832.

Special Order (No. —).

The Brigade Inspector, having inspected Captain Abraham Lincoln's Company and mustered them into service, reports that thirty guns are wanting to arm the Company completely. Quartermaster-General Edwards will furnish the Captain with that number of arms, if to be had in his department.

JOHN J. HARDIN, *Brig. Major.*

By order of

BRIGADIER-GENERAL SAMUEL WHITESIDE,
Commanding B. M. V. Illinois.